



United States Senator  
**Richard Shelby**  
REPORTS TO ALABAMA



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## KEEPING ALABAMA IN WASHINGTON

Since my election to the U. S. Senate in 1986, I have held an open, county-wide meeting in each of Alabama's 67 counties every year, and to date, I have held almost 700.

These meetings fulfill several basic functions. As a U. S. Senator, my primary responsibility is to represent the wishes, the values, and the concerns of the people of our state. As I travel, I have found it very beneficial to talk with our state's citizens directly, hearing first-hand their opinions about issues while sharing some of my own insight.

Many elected officials only visit their constituents when they are running for office—a fact that not only breeds cynicism and distrust, but that fails to recognize the importance of face-to-face communication with those the official represents. The people of this state deserve the best representation available. That is what I work hard to provide, and that is why I make myself available.

These meetings also help me to focus my legislative agenda on the issues most important to the people of this state. While I regularly hear concerns and complaints about Social Security and Medicare, the issue I hear about most is the need for tax reform. I began to study legislation that would create a simpler, more equitable flat-rate tax to replace our

current system. I believe, like most Alabamians I've talk to, that taxpayers should keep more of what they earn, and not be penalized for saving and investing their money. I joined with House Majority Leader Dick Armey to introduce the Armey-Shelby Flat Tax a few years ago. The Armey-Shelby Flat Tax would create a system where every American's income is taxed once and only once at its source, and it would eliminate the burdens and complexities of our current system—a fact that anyone who pays taxes has experienced.

Some of my county meetings have even led to my involvement in issues of serious national and international significance. In 1991, I was approached by several Gulf War veterans from Alabama who were suffering physical and emotional ailments as a result of their service. Their attendance at a county meeting brought this issue to my attention and led me to conduct an extensive investigation into what has since become known as the Persian Gulf War Syndrome. I was the first person to make the claim that low-level chemicals were indeed present in the theater of operations in the Persian Gulf—a claim rejected by the Pentagon at the time, but that has now been proven as fact. Meeting those veterans face-to-face had a significant im-

pact on my personal involvement with the Gulf War Syndrome issue.

This year, like meetings in years past, I will open each county meeting with a brief statement about some of the important issues to come before the Congress, as well as some of the issues that are part of my legislative agenda. Certainly, one of the primary issues is tax reform. I also plan to talk about the challenges our nation faces in educating our children, the importance of protecting and preserving Social Security and Medicare, as well as ensuring that our nation's defense infrastructure remains strong and ready. Following my opening statement, I will open the meeting up to questions from those attending. Additionally, I encourage those who are experiencing problems with Social Security and/or Veterans benefits to meet with me or one of the aides traveling with me.

I hope that you will join me at a county meeting in your county or area. Your impact plays a critical role in my representation of our state, and the value of these meetings truly cannot be overstated.

For dates and locations, please consult your local news media, or contact my Washington, D.C. office at (202) 224-5744 for more information. I look forward to seeing you.

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